



East Idaho Corridor Loop Plan
US 93 SH 33 SH 28 SH 22 US 20 US 26

East
Idaho



Corridor Loop Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JUNE 2006



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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The East Idaho Corridor Loop Plan (EICLP) involves the review and planning for potential improvements to portions of US 93, US 20, SH 28, SH 22, and SH 33 in the eastern Idaho region. Together, these roadways provide a “loop” connection between several rural communities and other regional destinations (see the *corridor study area map* on page 7). The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) has recognized the significance of the corridor to the eastern Idaho region and has committed to the effective planning of the area to meet the long-term needs of the public in the region, and to ensure that the continued efficiency of these routes is maintained. The Idaho Transportation Department commissioned this report to document the results of a study that addresses the role of the corridor in terms of economic vitality, the environment, right-of-way preservation, and the impacts of local land use on corridor operation and safety. The study also looks at all transportation modes, including public transportation, air, bicycle and pedestrian considerations, freight, and the needs of individuals in personal automobiles.

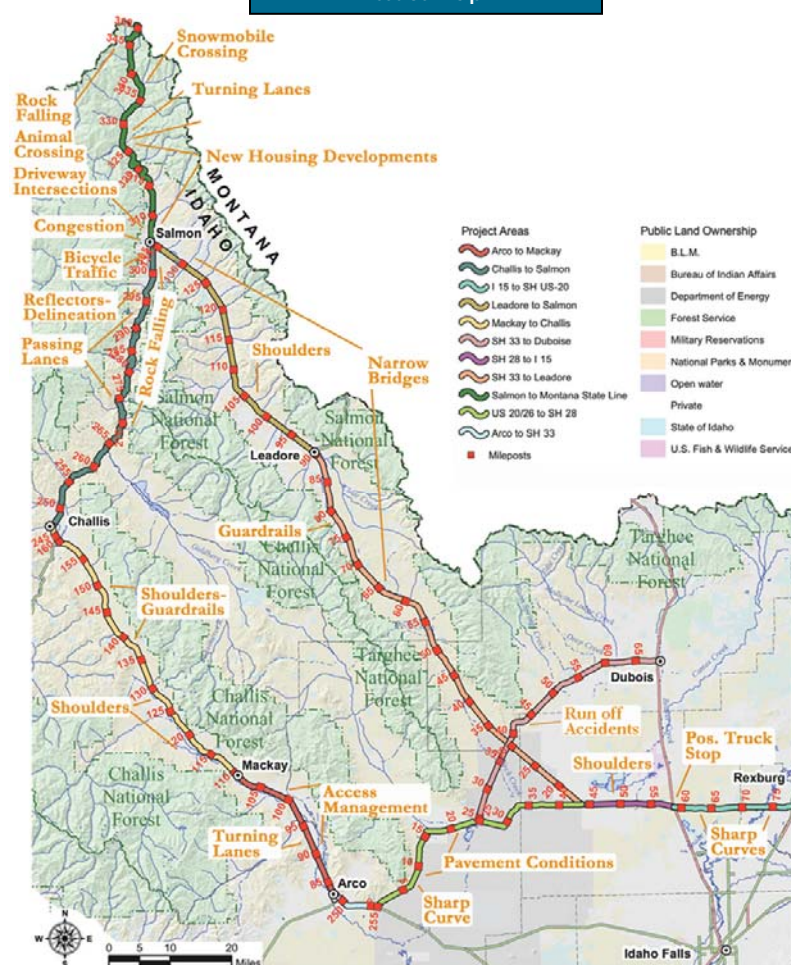
1.2 KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

The collection of comments received through the public involvement activities identified key issues as illustrated in the map shown at right. In addition, Project Partner Workshops in the Challis and Salmon area identified signage requests and needed urban improvements such as bike/pedestrian pathways, crossings, congestion mitigation needs, and lighting. An Agency Workshop identified a cooperative project between ITD and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to remove brush on SH 28 along the Lemhi River to improve visibility and reduce animal collisions.

1.3 PURPOSE, NEED, AND GOALS

The corridor purpose statement was developed to outline the purpose of the Plan. The list of needs and corridor goals were developed based on input received from the public involvement activities and the technical assessment and operational needs of the corridor. The purpose and need statement, along with the goals, were used to determine and evaluate potential alternatives to identify the final Plan recommendations.

East Idaho Corridor Loop Plan
Issues Map



CORRIDOR PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop Plan is to assess roadway conditions and growth patterns within the corridor study area and to develop recommendations for roadway management and upgrades to meet the needs of the corridor and residents for the next 20 years.

CORRIDOR NEEDS

- Safe design of corridor facilities with attention to:
 - Roadway and shoulder width
 - Horizontal curvature
 - Number and location of passing lanes
 - Warning and protection devices such as reflectors and guardrails
 - Intersection safety and capacity
- Safe access to new development adjacent to the corridor
- Year-round connectivity to local, regional, and statewide destinations
- Adequate bike and pedestrian facilities to support local and regional use
- Adequate signage to support adjacent community needs
- Decreased vehicle / wild and domestic animal collisions
- Sufficient bridge condition and capacity to meet corridor and user needs

CORRIDOR PLAN GOALS

The goal of the Plan is to address the needs of the transportation routes by reviewing the existing traffic, land use, and environmental conditions to improve the safety and physical characteristics of the roadway; to reduce congestion and animal collisions, and to support economic development, enhanced planning coordination, and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

CORRIDOR OPERATIONAL GOALS

- Improve safety throughout the corridor for all modes of travel
- Reduce congestion where needed
- Adequate roadway geometrics
- Apply context sensitive design
- Reduce wildlife collisions
- Support provision of adequate bike/pedestrian facilities
- Support economic development
- Enhanced planning coordination

1.4 EICLP PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Plan recommendations were developed to meet the corridor's established needs and goals in two general areas - policies and improvement projects. These two areas are inter-related since the successful and full implementation of many of the improvement projects is contingent upon, or enhanced by, the policy recommendations. The policy

recommendations also create a critical cooperative bond between ITD and the corridor communities and residents for Plan implementation and ongoing management.

1.4.1 Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations are designed to support the safe and efficient function of the roadways in the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop. These policies are intended to compliment and enhance the integration of the Idaho Transportation Department's management of the corridor with local communities, counties, affected agencies and their associated land use and management policies.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- All improvements to state roadways within the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop Plan will be planned and implemented with sensitivity to the natural and man made environment, with preference to solutions that minimize impacts to the environment.
- All improvements to the state roadways within the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop will strive to decrease the impact of roadway operation on wildlife habitat and decrease collisions with wildlife.

DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS

- New improvements to the ITD roadways within the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop will be done in a manner that is context sensitive to the function, aesthetics, safety, and mobility needs of the corridor communities, residents, and businesses.
- New improvements to ITD roadways within the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop will appropriately accommodate the safe mobility needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. Plans for development of bike and pedestrian facilities will be developed with consideration given to existing local plans for bike and pedestrian improvements and in coordination with local communities and organizations to ensure that the most appropriate facility is developed to meet specific local and user needs.
- Improvements to state roadways within the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop will be planned to improve safety, when the posted speeds are abided by.
- ITD will work closely with corridor communities and residents to routinely evaluate and set speed limits that are appropriate for safe roadway operation.

COORDINATION OF EFFORTS

- Planning for any new development and improvements to state roadways within the Eastern Idaho Corridor Loop will be done in a collaborative manner. The Idaho Transportation Department, all affected local governments (including the *Montana Department of Transportation* where appropriate), related agencies, interested user groups, affected property owners and business operators as necessary will be involved to ensure the most appropriate improvements are determined and implemented.
- The Idaho Transportation Department will strive for thorough and effective communication through reasonable efforts to inform local communities and corridor residents regarding planned repair, renovation, and major roadway maintenance activities that significantly impact roadway operation.
- The Idaho Transportation Department will work with local counties and communities (including local planning and zoning departments, and school districts) to establish and implement a collaborative planned development review process.

MULTIMODAL ROUTE/COORDINATION

- The Idaho Transportation Department will support the development of the proposed multi-modal trail (coordinated by Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation) in the southern part of the corridor connecting Arco, Mackay, and Challis.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- ITD, through their Division of Public Transportation, will support local efforts to develop and provide appropriate public transportation services and support related roadway improvements such as pullouts and signage to meet the needs of senior citizens and other residents desiring these services.

1.4.2 Improvement Project Recommendations

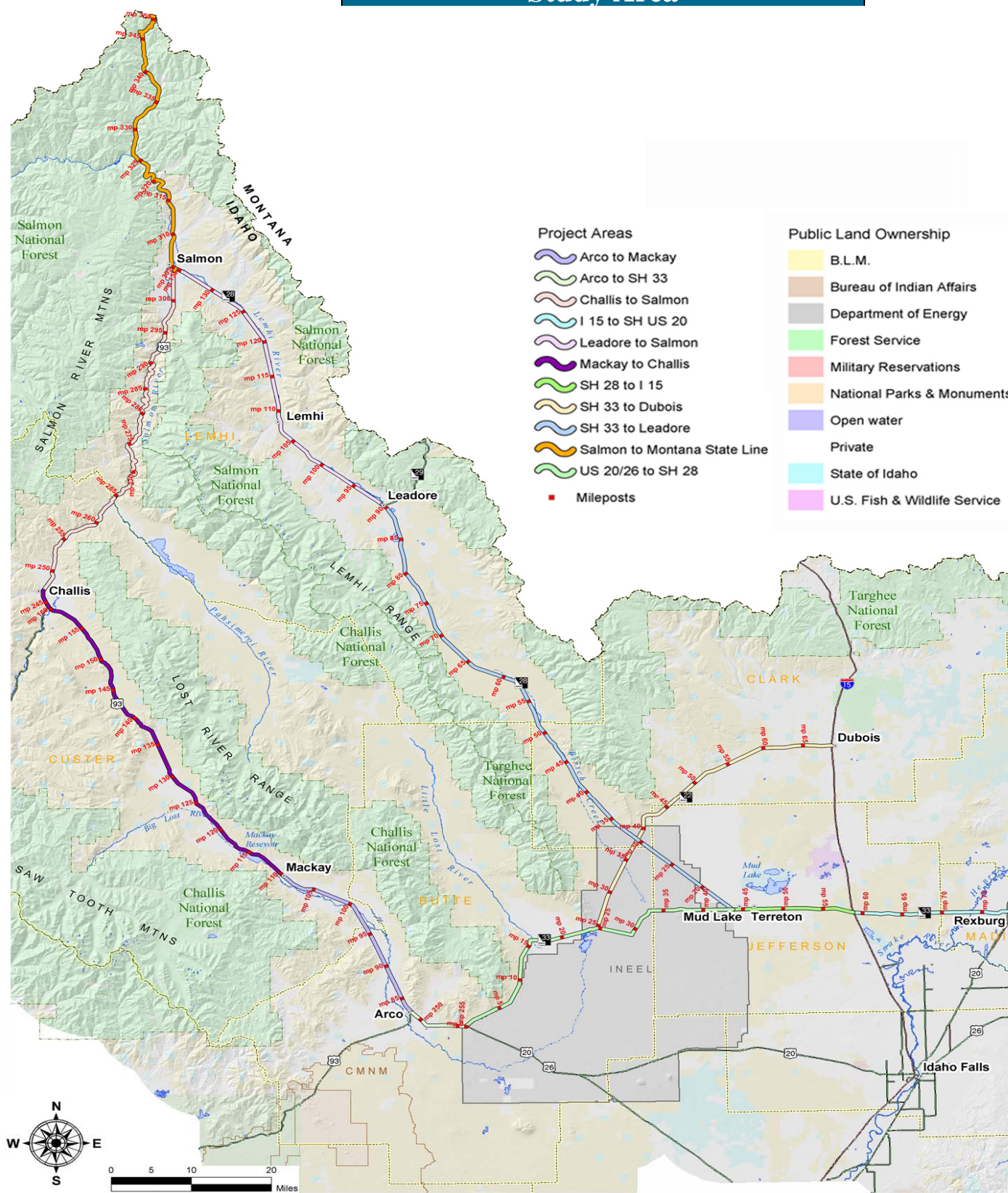
Specific improvement project recommendations were developed based on identified issues, technical and operational needs of the corridor, along with evaluation according to the established needs and goals. The general categories for improvements included capacity improvements, left turns, safety, urban improvements, and modernization. The cumulative list of recommended improvement projects is shown on the "Project Recommendations" map on the next page, with a detailed description of each in the corridor plan document. These projects will now be considered for funding by ITD when the new Statewide Transportation Improvement Program is developed. If funded, projects will then be subject to further review and public comment during the project development phase.

1.5 THE LOW-VOLUME CORRIDOR PLANNING PROCESS

Planning for low volume corridors has specific differences from the procedure used for those corridors with more typical traffic volumes. These differences are illustrated through a less intensive environmental process, a reduction in alternatives evaluation steps, and modified public involvement efforts. The public involvement plan for low volume corridors is also more streamlined, gathering input primarily at major decision points, supplemented with very specific activities targeted to meet the unique needs of the low volume corridor and its users. Specifically, the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the EICLP included only two rounds of general public open house events at key decision points; one at the beginning of the project to identify key issues and concerns and one near the conclusion of the process to present and gather comments on the draft plan recommendations. The corridor planning steps followed in the EICLP are shown in the table below.

East Idaho Corridor Loop Plan Corridor Planning Steps (Low-volume)	
Step #1	Identify Issues
Step #2	Research existing conditions of the transportation system
Step #3	Document existing and land use conditions
Step #4	Analyze future travel demand and performance
Step #5	Review corridor boundary / Develop purpose & need and goals
Step #6	Identify project areas and generate improvements to meet goals
Step #7	Project area environmental scan
Step #8	Identify feasible improvement projects and strategies
Step #9	Prepare draft project and policy recommendations
Step #10	Prepare final low-volume corridor plan

East Idaho Corridor Loop Plan Study Area



1.6 GENERAL CORRIDOR DESCRIPTION

The EICLP study area involves six counties, comprising 9.6 million acres (15,000 square miles) of diverse topography including lush forest, desert, lava beds, sagebrush plains, grasslands, and Borah Peak, the highest point in the state at 12,662 feet. With dense and rapidly growing urban areas, population density ranges from 0.6 persons per square mile to multi-story apartment complexes adjacent to a university. The economy for much of the area traditionally has been extractive, dependent on mining, logging, and agriculture, although high-tech and biotech industries, as well as higher education opportunities, are now available. Recreation is a universal component in the region and includes hunting and fishing, winter snow sports, wilderness backpacking and river-rafting opportunities.

The communities served by the EICLP include mostly small rural towns, primarily with populations of less than 3,500. The sole exception is Rexburg, located along SH 33 on the east edge of the corridor, which has a population of approximately 24,000. Rexburg is also the fastest growing community in the study area, with an anticipated population of over 33,000 by 2030 due primarily to the expansion of Brigham Young University-Idaho, in Rexburg.

In general, the transportation system in eastern Idaho serves an essential purpose in the daily lives of area residents and the traveling public visiting these communities and the region. The system connects home and work, schools, and shopping, while facilitating access to farms, ranches, and businesses. These routes also carry residents and travelers alike to the region's excellent natural attractions such as Craters of the Moon National Monument near Arco, the Salmon River, Land of the Yankee Fork near Challis, and cultural resources such as the new Sacajawea Center near Salmon.

1.7 CORRIDOR CONDITIONS

1.7.1 Roadway and Transportation System

The investigation of existing conditions on the East Idaho Corridor Loop transportation system identified a number of issues to be considered in the development of the corridor plan.

- Deficiencies in horizontal alignment exist over most of the roadways in the Loop. Although considered a minor defect on most roadways, US 93 has 68 locations where curvature is greater than recommended.
- There are only minor vertical alignment deficiencies along the Loop on SH 33 and US 93.
- Passing sight distance and passing opportunities are limited along US 93, in particular between Challis and Salmon.
- Shoulder width and condition are extremely poor in a significant portion of the corridor. Almost 23 percent of SH 33, 12 percent of SH 28, 56 percent of US 93, and 63 percent of SH 22 have shoulder width of one foot or less.
- Access control measures should be enhanced on eight different locations identified along SH 33, SH 28, and US 93.
- Pavement condition is poor in several locations along the corridor.
- There are only two bridges in poor condition, one on SH 28, and one on US 93.
- Truck traffic is expected to increase at a higher rate than general vehicle traffic.

- Even though crash rates are significantly lower than statewide non-interstate crash rates, the number of crashes in the Loop has constantly increased during the last six years.
- There is the need and desire for enhanced bike/pedestrian facilities at and around urban areas.
- Corridor volumes are so low that no level of service concern exists now or within the planning horizon by 2030, with the exception of US 93 in Salmon.

1.7.2 Traffic

The traffic volumes on the corridor are generally very low, with minor growth expected by the planning horizon of 2030. The two areas with the most significant concern for increased traffic volumes and congestion are on US 93 where it serves as Salmon's Main Street, and west of Rexburg on SH 33. Salmon's increase is expected due to increased community and regional population, and from travel into and through Salmon. The SH 33 increase is due to new residential development along the corridor, west of Rexburg, and the growing Rexburg population due to the expansion of the BYU-I campus in Rexburg. Seasonal traffic variations were also assessed which revealed that on almost every corridor, the traffic volumes in the summer months are double that of winter months. Regarding capacity, under existing traffic conditions, no section of the Loop was found to be near capacity. The segment with the highest volume to capacity ratio is located on US 93 along Salmon Main Street.

1.7.3 Crash History and Analysis

An assessment of the corridor accident history revealed that there were 862 crashes on the Loop during the six year analysis period. Fatal crashes accounted for approximately three percent of all crashes while injury crashes accounted for approximately 43 percent of all crashes. Crashes with property damage only (PDO) accounted for approximately 54 percent (466) of all crashes. The majority of accidents involved one vehicle and occurred on dry pavement. The most significant recommendations for roadway improvements derived from the crash history analysis include widening shoulders, providing adequate clear zones, using rumble strips, and widening pavement markings.

1.7.4 Environmental Scan

The environmental scan (broken into five roadway segments), pursuant to the low volume corridor guidelines, was conducted for all anticipated project areas in the corridor. The scan was conducted in two steps. First, the feasible alternatives were evaluated for the existence of any environmental fatal flaws that could result in either serious impacts or the likelihood to cause the alternative to be dropped during project development. Second, each of the segments was evaluated for land ownership, geology and soils, water resources, wetlands, noise, hazardous materials, vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, historical resources, archaeological resources and traditional resources.

1.8 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public involvement activities followed the ITD guidelines for low-volume corridor plans. The primary public involvement activities are shown (shaded in gray) in the table below, as they were integrated into the overall planning steps (shown in white).

East Idaho Corridor Loop Plan

Public Involvement Steps and Schedule

Step #1 Identify Issues	June / Aug 2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corridor Tour – review existing conditions and discuss future needs Stakeholder interviews – introduce the project / identify issues Meet with elected officials – introduce the project / identify issues 	
Public Open House #1: Project Kick Off—Identify Issues	July 04
Step #2 Research existing conditions of the transportation system	June / Aug 2004
Partner Projects Workshops: Communications, presentations & project planning	Sept 04
Step #3 Document existing and land use conditions	Sept / Oct 2004
Step #4 Analyze future travel demand and performance	Oct 2004
Step #5 Review corridor boundary / Develop purpose & need /corridor goals	Oct 2004
Step #6 Identify project areas and generate improvements to meet goals	Sept / Dec 2004
Step #7 Project area environmental scan	Oct/Dec 2004
Agency Workshop – Preliminary environmental area scan / draft improvement projects	Dec 2004
Step #8 Identify feasible improvement projects and strategies	Dec 04/Jan 05
ITD Staff Work Session – Environmental area scan and improvement projects	Jan 2005
Regional Transportation Committee Presentations – Draft projects	Feb 2005
Step #9 Prepare draft project and policy recommendations	Mar / Apr 05
Public Open House #2: Present Draft Recommended Improvements	May 2005
Step #10 Prepare final low-volume corridor plan	Spring 2006

1.8.1 Public Involvement Elements

The public involvement program was anchored with a series of core elements. Twenty stakeholder interviews were held at the beginning of the process to introduce the process and identify initial issues and concerns. Two public open houses were held (each time at three locations on the corridor); one at project kick-off to introduce the project and identify issues, and a second near the end of the project to gather comments on the draft plan recommendations. Project Partner Workshops were held in both Salmon and Challis to identify specific project needs and possible improvements to address those needs.

An Agency Workshop was held at the draft improvement project stage to identify any significant issues and concerns as well as any fatal flaws that may cause projects to be dropped from further consideration. A workshop was also held with the Loop's regional transportation committees to discuss draft projects and gather comments. Finally, a half-day work session was held with ITD staff to discuss the draft projects and gather comments for revision prior to developing the Plan recommendations.

The public involvement program was augmented with a Plan web site, two newsletters, media notices and articles, comment forms, and the use of a Plan mailing list for distribution of Plan materials and notices of upcoming activities. The final draft report, which detailed corridor findings and suggested improvement alternatives, was distributed to local libraries in the area for the public to be afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the report. No comments were received regarding the final draft corridor plan document.